

MEMBERS IN SERVICE

Robert Gale Noyes (Brown) has been a Sergeant in the Field Artillery, stationed at Camp Breckinridge, Ky. He writes: "I am here at Headquarters, doing everything from filling out court martial charges, Reports of Survey, and applications for O. C. S., to writing memorandums (army language) on garbage-removal, guard, and buck slips. I very foolishly admitted that I had considerable facility at the typewriter, since when I have fought the war single-handed with a Remington (Rand)."

The latest word is that on April 9 he goes to the Officers' Candidate School in Army Administration at the University of Florida. We know that he will be glad to withdraw to a prepared position far away from west Kentucky mud.

H. T. Swedenberg, Jr. (UCLA) is a First Lieutenant in the Army and has since the middle of last fall been working in the Publications Division of the Barrage Balloon School at Camp Tyson, Tennessee. He writes: "The division has the job of preparing training films and training literature for the Army on all phases of Barrage Balloon work. My work is preparing pamphlets and Field Manuals....The materials I deal with are as different from those of English literature of the 18th century as you could imagine; nevertheless scholarly techniques apply to an Army Field Manual, and so I feel fairly well at home."

Maury Quinlan (St. Joseph) writes from Fort Jackson, So. Carolina, that he heartily approves the new format of the News Letter. He adds that Army life so agrees with him that, even though over 38, he intends to stay in the service.

But the Manual of Arms and twenty-mile hikes haven't taken his mind completely off the 18th century, for he comments: "I was surprised and pleased to find an excellent bookstore in Columbia, S.C. Gittman's has many fine eighteenth century volumes, and though I have

not time to read them, I enjoy dropping into the store to thumb through mellowed volumes, bound in calf, with such familiar title pages as those put out under the name of Rivington and other publishers of the period."

W. C. Powell (U. of Pa.), who has recently completed a book on Christopher Anstey, is now an ensign with the amphibious force of the Navy.

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ON THE HOME FRONT

Jim Osborn (Yale) has recently been elected Chairman of the State OCD Training Directors for the twelve states of Regions I, II, and III, from Maine through Virginia. He is now involved in preparing a complete revision of the OCD training requirements, all of which has meant some struggles with the powers-that-be. In reporting a recent conference, the New York Times cautiously commented that "it was apparent that the civilians and the military were at odds."

Many of our members who are either too old or have been rejected for active military service are finding that the war has vitally affected their lives just the same. A few sample comments in recent letters are passed along to show you that you are not alone in being uprooted from the old familiar routines.

D. C. Bryant (Wash. U.), for instance, writes that "Scholarship is for the time being a pleasant memory ... Burke et al, like "Lucky Strike Green", have gone to war." Instead he is to be in charge of English, speech, and humanities in various army programs on the university campus.

Similarly Dick Boys (Mich.) is hard at work on a new pre-induction course, and Flora M. Handley (SMU) is enrolled for a course in engineering mathematics. So it goes. From now on every one of us is in for a rude change of occupation.

HUME AND JOHNSON

In his admirable study, The Forgotten Hume, Ernest Mossner makes some searching and rather provocative claims for Hume and his Scotch literary circle. We wonder whether some of our readers may not wish to comment briefly on some of these ideas in our News Letter.

For instance, Mossner speculates on "why it was Samuel Johnson and not David Hume who lent his name to that era." Why do we not call the mid-eighteenth century—that time of growing skepticism and revolt—the "Age of Hume" instead of the "Age of Johnson?" Why has the authoritarian, dogmatic Johnson been taken as the representative figure of his day, rather than the urbane, philosophic skeptic, David Hume? Is it merely because we chance to know so much more about the Sage of Fleet Street than about "Le bon David?" Is Boswell solely responsible?

Suppose Boswell had decided to write the life of Hume, and had concentrated on recreating for posterity the kindly Scotch philosopher instead of his London rival? Would we now know as much about Hume? And would he loom as large in our general thinking about the period as does Johnson now? In other words, could a life of Hume ever have been as colorful and entertaining as is the Life of Johnson?

Certainly these are interesting speculations, and we hope that after you have read Mossner's able plea for his hero that you will let us know your reactions.

Another very penetrating, yet debatable, analysis which Mossner makes may also stir up some controversy. He writes: "Johnson's hatred of Hume was grounded on fear — on the fear that Hume might conceivably be right, and if right, that immortality itself was unsure. Johnson's religious skepticism, therefore, became the strength of his religious faith: the more he doubted, the more desperately he believed." Was Johnson, then, a true skeptic himself? Could his active

faith been the result of fear? Is it possible that his fervent prayers and meditations were the outpourings of a troubled spirit afraid to know the truth, rather than the devout reflections of a truly religious believer?

Here is a challenge to consider. What is your answer?

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JOHNSON THE LIBERAL

Far too often some of us are prone to think of Samuel Johnson as the epitome of unyielding conservatism — an old tory, opposed in principle to all liberal change in everything. We forget that Johnson was often himself in revolt against the accepted usages of the past and of his own time. In certain instances he was a revolutionary innovator.

Thus occasionally it may be well to remind ourselves of his services to progress; and we welcome Wylie Sypher's (Simmons) interesting discussion in Guinea's Captive Kings of Johnson's humanitarian stand on the slavery question. As Sypher points out, Johnson was from the beginning of his career zealous against slavery in every form. Again and again in his shorter biographies, in the Idler, in miscellaneous essays and introductions, he returns to the attack and reiterates his abhorrence of the savage treatment given conquered peoples by the victors.

On one occasion Johnson even went so far as to offer as a toast, "Here's to the next insurrection of the negroes in the West Indies." (Life, III, 200) The usually more liberal Boswell had a far greater regard for the rights of property involved in the ownership of slaves than did Johnson, who once expressed himself: "No man is by nature the property of another: The defendant is, therefore, by nature free." In fact, the Doctor throughout argued entirely on the theory of the natural inherent rights of man. As Sypher so aptly puts it in summing up, "Tom Paine could not say more."

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